World War I began in August 1914. It was triggered by the assassination of the Austrian archduke and his wife, on June 28, 1914 planned by Serbia. Countries began to form alliances. An alliance is an agreement made between two or more countries to give each other help if it is needed. When an alliance is signed, those countries become known as Allies.  
  
 A number of alliances had been signed by countries between the years 1879 and 1914. These were important because they meant that some countries had no option but to declare war if one of their allies.

Imperialism bagen to take place. Imperialism is when a country takes over new lands or countries and makes them subject to their rule. With the rise of industrialism countries needed new markets. The amount of lands 'owned' by Britain and France increased the rivalry with Germany. Also militarism took place; and along with nationalism. Militarism means that the army and military forces are given a high profile by the government. The growing European divide had led to an arms race between the main countries. The armies of both France and Germany had more than doubled between 1870 and 1914 and there was fierce competition between Britain and Germany for mastery of the seas. The German, drew up a plan of action that involved attacking France through Belgium if Russia made an attack on Germany. Nationalism means being a strong supporter of the rights and interests of one's country. The Congress of Vienna, held after Napoleon's exile to Elba, aimed to sort out problems in Europe. Delegates from Britain, Austria, Prussia and Russia (the winning allies) decided upon a new Europe that left both   
  
 Austria-Hungary took over the former Turkish province of Bosnia. This angered Serbians who felt the province should be theirs. Serbia threatened Austria-Hungary with war, Russia, allied to Serbia, mobilised its forces. Germany, allied to Austria-Hungary mobilised its forces and prepared to threaten Russia. War was avoided when Russia backed down. Tension between Serbia and Austria-Hungary was high.